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**Abstract**

The past decade or so has witnessed a large-scale reform of the Chinese national college entrance exam (the gaokao) system, which nonetheless has been trapped within a dilemma of balancing diversification and equality. Specifically speaking, the reform needs to reconcile the clash between adopting diverse and holistic college admissions to fix the problem of teaching to test preparation in k-12 schools and preserving the gaokao results as the sole admission criterion to warrant equal opportunity of higher education. This conflicting concern has impacted and shaped the gaokao reform since 1999, which is the key to understanding the various incremental reform measures taken by the Chinese Ministry of Education and the slow progress of the gaokao reform per se. The study suggests that lack of both institutional autonomy and accountability in Chinese universities has contributed to the impasse because government has to heavily rely on the gaokao to ensure equality when Chinese higher institutions do not operate independently. Conversely, if Chinese universities need to be

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empowered to conduct a holistic review they have to become independent and autonomous entities that view admissions or quality of their enrolment as vital for survival and prosperity to eliminate external interference and internal corruption. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)